

CLAIMS

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1. A vehicle having a storage compartment to enclose an auxiliary load, comprising:
a chassis, comprising a drop deck;
a body mounted to the chassis comprising body walls in combination with the drop deck, a ceiling, and at least one hatch hingedly attached to the body to define the storage compartment;
the drop deck comprising a means to raise the drop deck to a closed and lower to an open position, and a means to secure the drop deck in the closed position.
2. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the areas within the storage compartment are lined with a firewall rated material.
3. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the hatch further comprises at least one gas shock with a first gas shock end attached to a hatch edge and a second gas shock end attached to the vehicle body, thereby assisting in raising the hatch and holding the hatch in an open position.
4. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein an edge of the drop deck is hingedly mounted to the chassis.
5. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the means to raise and lower the drop deck is at least one hydraulic lift cylinder with a first cylinder end attached to the chassis and a second cylinder end attached to the an edge of the drop deck, the hydraulic lift cylinder having sufficient power to raise and lower the drop deck and the auxiliary load.

- A1
- not shown
- not shown
6. The vehicle of claim 5, comprising at least four hydraulic lift cylinders configured to lower, raise and store the drop deck in a level plane.
7. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the means to secure the drop deck in the closed position comprises at least one post attached to the drop deck, the post comprising a post stop adjacent and corresponding to a releasable latching device attached to the chassis configured to receive the post stop and to support the drop deck and the auxiliary load.
8. The vehicle of claim 1, further comprising a winch device and cable attached to the storage compartment on an interior surface adjacent to the hatch.
9. The vehicle of claim 8, wherein the winch device and cable further comprises a wheeled dolly.
10. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the body walls are reinforced, whereby injury to the vehicle or surrounding vehicles is minimized if the auxiliary load shifts during transport.
11. The vehicle of claim 1, comprising two hatches on adjacent body walls.
12. The vehicle of claim 1 further including a means to prevent the vehicle from driving off when the drop deck is in a lowered position.
13. The vehicle of claim 12, wherein the means to prevent the vehicle from driving off when the drop deck is in a lowered position comprises a drop deck position sensor connected to an indicator lamp to alert the vehicle operator of the position of the drop deck.
14. The vehicle of claim 12, wherein the means to prevent the vehicle from driving off when the drop deck is in a lowered position comprises a "kill" switch, a PRNDL gear selector position sensor, and a drop deck position sensor wherein the vehicle operator could be prohibited from lowering the deck if the

PRNDL gear selector is not in "Park," and if drop deck 24 is lowered, the operator could be prohibited from taking the PRNDL gear selector out of "Park."

15. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the vehicle comprises additional interior
5 spaces.

16. The vehicle of claim 15, wherein the storage compartment is located in the rear of the vehicle, and the hatch is located on a rear wall of the vehicle.

17. The vehicle of claim 15, wherein the storage compartment is located in the front of the vehicle, and the hatch is located on a front wall of the vehicle.

18. The vehicle of claim 15, wherein the additional interior space extends over the storage compartment ceiling and further comprises an access door on a body wall or ceiling, whereby the storage compartment can be accessible to the other interior spaces of the vehicle.

19. A vehicle having a storage compartment to enclose an auxiliary load,
15 comprising:

a chassis, comprising a fixed deck; and

a body mounted to the chassis comprising body walls in combination with the drop deck, a ceiling, and at least one hatch hingedly attached to the body to define the storage compartment.